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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000089

SIPDIS

FROM BRAZZAVILLE EMBASSY OFFICE
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER; DEPT FOR AF/C - BARGERON

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SUBJECT: CONGO/B: POST-NEW GOVERNMENT - WHAT'S NEXT FOR
CONGO'S FUTURE

REF: A) KINSHASA 80 B) KINSHASA 2115

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBIN R. SANDERS FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE SHOCK THAT THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT SASSOU ON JANUARY 8, IS NOT NEW AT ALL BUT MAINTAINS MANY OF THE COUNTRY'S WELL-KNOWN HARDLINERS HAS WORN AWAY A BIT, THE ATMOSPHERE OF DISAPPOINTMENT PREVAILS THAT SASSOU MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE UP TO HIS YEAR LONG RHETORIC ON PERMANENT AND LASTING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM. THE RECONFIGURED CABINET HAS ALMOST NO NEW THINKERS IN IT AND SASSOU CONTINUES TO BE SURROUNDED BY MANY OF THE OLDER GENERATION WHO WERE TRAINED IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND ARE NOT SUPPORTERS OF FREE MARKET OR POLITICAL REFORM. THIS DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR CONGO IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM EITHER POLITICALLY OR ECONOMICALLY. WE WILL NEED TO MONITOR CLOSELY WHETHER CONGO NOT ONLY MAINTAINS PAST REFORMS AND TRANSPARENCY EFFORT, BUT ALSO THAT IT ADVANCES THESE EFFORTS IN ORDER TO STAY ON THE IMF PRGF PROGRAM AND TO REEARN MODEST CONSIDERATION WITH THE IFIS AFTER THE NON-REAPPOINTMENT OF FORMER FINANCE MINISTER ANDLEY. THERE ARE INITIAL WORRYING ECONOMIC SIGNS THAT ROLLBACKS COULD HAPPEN GIVEN THAT THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE STATE OIL COMPANY SNPC, DENIS GOKANA, IS SASSOU'S NEPHEW WHO PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS A SPECIAL ADVISOR AT THE PRESIDENCY. ALTHOUGH SNPC HAD MADE SOME TRANSPARENCY IMPROVEMENTS TO MEET IMF MEASURES THERE ARE STILL SNPC AUDIT COMMITMENTS THAT MUST BE MET. THE NEW GOVERNMENT LIST AND PHOTOS HAVE BEEN FAXED TO DEPARTMENT. WITH THE RECONFIGURED CABINET, CONGO'S NEAR AND MEDIUM TERM FUTURE DOES NOT LOOK THAT BRIGHT. END SUMMARY.

A LOOK AT SASSOU: A CASE OF POLITICAL SURVIVAL

12. (C) PRESIDENT SASSOU HAS SPENT THE LAST YEAR ENSURING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS OF HIS COMMITMENT TO BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM. BOTH HIS NATIONAL DAY (REF B), AND NEW YEAR'S DAY REMARKS (REF A) STRESSED THESE POINTS AND, FOR OUR PART, SASSOU UNDERScoreD THIS CHANGE AND COMMITMENT WITH ALL US VISITORS, OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR. WHAT WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, IS THAT SASSOU'S POLITICAL POWER OR CONTINUED HOLD ON SUCH REQUIRED HIM TO MOVE AWAY FOR HIS STATED VISION (SUCH AS ESTABLISHING A REFORM POLITICAL PARTY) FOR THE COUNTRY, IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO APPEASE THE NUMEROUS HARDLINERS - ALL WHO REPRESENT VARIOUS NORTHERN ETHNIC GROUPS (E.G. MBOKI, MBET, BOMITABA, LEKOKA, MBONGO, AND LIKOULA). THESE GROUPS HELPED HIM AND HIS SMALL MBOCHI CLAN WIN THE 1997-2001 CONFLICTS. NORTHERN GROUPS FROM THE LIKOULA AREA CONTROL MOST OF THE REPUBLICAN GUARD AND MILITARY, AND MANY OF THOSE MEMBERS WERE IN SASSOU'S WAR FIGHTING COBRA MILITIA UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ANGOLAN FORCES AND WITH MEMBERS OF THE INTERAHAMWE.

13. (C) DURING MOST OF 2004, THE INTERNAL STRUGGLES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT WERE EVIDENT. THE GOVERNMENT WAS SPLIT BETWEEN PRO-IMF/POLITICAL REFORMERS, AND THE HARDLINERS WHO FOUGHT TRANSPARENCY EVERY STEP OF THE WAY AS IT HINDERED THEIR ABILITY FOR PERSONAL ENRICHMENT. THE REFORMERS, WITH STRONG BACKING FROM SASSOU IN 2004 WERE FEW: FINANCE MINISTER ANDLEY, HEALTH MINISTER MOKA, INFORMATION MINISTER AKOULA, AND TO SOME EXTENT THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES, GENERAL MONDJO. FORMER FINANCE MINISTER ANDLEY'S SURVIVAL WAS ALWAYS LINKED TO THE CONSTANT SUPPORT AND PROTECTION OF THE PRESIDENT. IN LATE 2004 AND IN THE EARLY DAYS OF 2005, AFTER SASSOU'S REMARKS OF STRONG APPRECIATION FOR THE SUPPORT FROM THE IFIS AND CONGO'S APPROVAL FOR THE IMF/PRGF PROGRAM, HARDLINERS MOVED IN TO NOT ONLY CONVINCE SASSOU THAT ANDLEY WAS NO LONGER NEEDED BECAUSE CONGO "HAD THE IMF PROGRAM NOW," BUT AS WE UNDERSTAND, REMINDED HIM THAT HIS POLITICAL SURVIVAL DEPENDED ON THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT. IN THE END, IT APPEARS HE CHOSE POLITICAL SURVIVAL OVER REFORM.

CONVERSATION WITH FORMER FINANCE MINISTER ANDLEY

14. (C) IN SPEAKING WITH OUT GOING FINANCE MINISTER ANDLEY JANUARY 8-10, HE TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HIS NON-REAPPOINTMENT CAME AS A SURPRISE WHEN HE WAS INFORMED

JUST BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THE PRESIDENT MET WITH HIM FOR FOUR HOURS OUTLINING THAT HE HAD WANTED TO KEEP HIM IN THE POSITION BUT THAT THERE WAS STRONG OPPOSITION FROM MANY IN THE INNER CIRCLE. ANDLEY ALSO REMARKED THAT SASSOU SAID HE WANTED TO "PROTECT ANDLEY" FROM ANY HARM THAT MIGHT COME TO HIM, SIMILAR TO WHAT HAPPEN TO ANDLEY,S BROTHER. (NOTE: ANDLEY,S OLDER BROTHER, WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF CONGO,S VERSION OF THE NATIONAL LOTTERY, WAS MYSTERIOUSLY KILLED IN A HOTEL IN PARIS LATE 1980S WHEN TRAVELING WITH A GROUP OF CONGOLESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. RUMORS WERE THAT HE WAS KILLED BECAUSE OF THE MONEY INVOLVED IN THE LOTTERY. END NOTE). ANDLEY ADDED THAT SASSOU TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD CONSIDER BRINGING HIM BACK WHEN THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE WAS LESS CHARGED, AND IN THE MEANTIME HE WOULD NOMINATE HIM TO RETURN TO HIS OLD JOB AS VICE GOVERNOR OF THE BANK OF CENTRAL AFRICA. ANDLEY EXPLAINED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE DID "THE BEST HE COULD TO HELP HIS COUNTRY," AND THAT HE IS WALKING AWAY WITHOUT REGRETS.

15. (C) ANDLEY ALSO SHED LIGHT ON SOME OF HIS STRONGEST ENEMIES AND THOSE HE HAD TO ALWAYS BLOCK FROM USING THE TREASURY AND STATE RESOURCES AS PERSONAL FINANCIAL VEHICLES. THEY INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, ISIDOIRE MVOUBA (FORMER MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT COORDINATION), ENVIRONMENT MINISTER DJOMBO, AND MINISTER OF PLAN PIERRE MOUSSA. OTHER HARDLINERS INCLUDE THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (ADADA), DEFENSE (NDOLOU), SECURITY (MBOT), MINES (OBA), AND TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION (IBOVI). THESE REPRESENT THE KITCHEN CABINET OF THE PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE A PLETHORA OF "FAMILY HARDLINE ADVISORS" AT THE PRESIDENCY WHO ALSO HAVE A STRONG INFLUENCE ON SASSOU INCLUDING HIS NEPHEW, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JEAN DOMINIQUE OKEMBA, AND HIS UNCLE MINISTER OF STATE EMMANUEL YOKA.

BIO NOTE ON NEW FINANCE MINISTER ISSOIBEKA

16. (C) CONGO,S NEW FINANCE MINISTER PACIFIQUE ISSOEBEKA HAS SERVED AS THE VICE GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK OF AFRICA IN YAOUNDE FOR THE LAST TWO AND HALF YEARS. PRIOR TO THAT HE WAS DIRECTOR OF THE BRAZZAVILLE BRANCH OFFICE OF THE CENTRAL AFRICA BANK. HE IS 63 YEARS OLD AND IN THE 1970S SERVED AS THE DIRECTOR OF CONGO,S NATIONAL SUGAR COMPANY. IN AMBASSADOR,S INITIAL MEETING WITH ISSOIBEKA HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE THE DRIVE OF ENERGY OF THE FORMER FINANCE MINISTER. HOWEVER WE WILL NEED TO WAIT AND SEE HOW HE HANDLES THE POLITICAL PRESSURES THAT WILL COME FROM MANY OF THE HARDLINERS WHO MAY BE LOOKING TO RETURN TO ENRICHING THEMSELVES FROM STATE RESOURCES.

OTHER ATMOSPHERICS - WEAPON CACHES

17. (C) THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OVER THE LAST WEEK OF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF VARIOUS WEAPONS CACHES AS WELL AS THE THEFT OF WEAPONS FROM SEVERAL MILITARY COMPOUNDS. THIS MAY OR MAY NOT BE LINKED TO VARIOUS CONCERNS REGARDING THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT. POST WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THIS ISSUE TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THERE ARE LINKAGES TO THE GOVERNMENT CHANGE OR WHETHER THIS IS THE NORMAL CONGO BEHAVIOR OF STEALING WEAPONS FOR CASH.

18. (U) BRAZZAVILLE OFFICE - SANDERS

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